

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

GRACIAN'S BOOK OF MAXIMS TRANSLATED.  
THE ART OF WORLDLY WISDOM. By Balthasar Gracian. Translated from the Spanish by Joseph Jacobs. Pub. JAININ, 1893. Macmillan & Co.

What a self-satisfied person must be who says he can tell others how to get on in life. For the cases of no two persons are alike, and the differences are as a rule the only thing important in the comparison. Maxims of conduct are generally the utterance of those who never succeed. He that has most probables has least occasion for any, unless he may find one to comfort him in his mischaps. Those who succeed do so usually for the called jade of a proverb can get within striking distance. It is perhaps a practical illustration of the uselessness of wise sages and fit injunctions and all the rest of the quaint rubbish handed down by tradition that one of the least successful among modern nations should have the most probables and should have the best and most entertaining book of maxims ever written. It was the same with antiquity. No race was ever less successful than the Hebrews in politics. Yet the Book of Proverbs is a treasure of political wisdom. A Spaniard may, if he chooses, cap every incident of his career with a telling and epigrammatic saying. But the beauty of the saying seems somehow to detract from its utility in practical affairs.

Mr. Jacobs has given to his translation the terseness, the sharp contrasts, the abrupt changes that add beauty to his original, and these are the things longed for in such a book. Thus: "A wise man gets more use from his enemies than a fool from his friends"; or "Tis a troublesome thing to rule men, still more fools or blockheads; double sense is needed for those who have none." Again, "If you wish to be valued, be valued for your talents, not for anything adventitious." Under the 222d maxim: "Reserve is a proof of prudence." It is remarked: "The tongue is a wild beast; once let loose, it is difficult to chain." It is the pulse of the soul, by which wise men judge of its health. Every paragraph is a delight. The combination of mild cynicism and seeming candor, the gentleness of the dows with the cutting of a serpent, as befitting Gracian's religious profession, is well reflected in this English version. But for the rough and ready necessities of real life these maxims and comments are of no more use than a Damascus blade would be for peeling potatoes.

The book has some notable features in addition to the translation. Right after the preface, quite in the manner of not a few volumes dating from the revival of learning, there is a collection of testimonies to the merits of Gracian. Then comes an introduction discussing the witty author and his works, and maxims in general, as differing from aphorisms and proverbs. "Where the aphorism states a fact of human nature," says he, "a maxim advises a course of action." And he remarks in another place, "It was, we may be sure, a definite English gaffer who first said 'penny wise, pound foolish'; if we knew his name we would call it a maxim; as his name is unknown, it ranks as a proverb." Finally he discusses the merits of Gracian's "Oracle Manual." The author had the good breeding of a Jesuit, he had the literary skill of a successful romance writer, and he lived at just the time in the seventeenth century when the proper style had been perfected for making a good book of maxims. The introduction is followed by a bibliography, and then comes a list of the leading maxims, the translations being followed in each case by the Spanish original. After the body of the book come a few pages of notes upon obscure matters. Once or twice there is an infusion of something quite modern and personal. For example, after quoting the injunction, "Never become paradoxical in order to avoid the footnote," Mr. Jacobs adds in the undertone of a footnote: "Mr. Oscar Wilde's attention may be respectfully called to this."

## New Publications.

TWENTIETH EDITION, 1893, FOR 25c. OR 30c.  
THE HUMAN BODY: Why it falls off & turns over. By Prof. HARLEY PALMER. A. M. LONG & CO., 1,013 Archet, Phila., Penn. "Every one should read this little book."—Atheneum.

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All these matters are pleasantly touched upon in the book I have been speaking about, which anybody can get, just by writing for it.

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